

Looking out for fish disease

Fish health and management series

As a fishery manager or a keen angler you need to recognise the first signs of fish disease. By identifying these signs you can take quick action and help prevent fish deaths.

However, a small number of fish showing unusual behaviour or disease symptoms does not necessarily mean that all your fish will die. Fish can sometimes recover without intervention. This is why it is important to regularly check the health of your fish. If the problem does not go away, or if it gets worse, then always seek advice from your local Environment Agency fisheries officer.

What to look out for

By regularly checking the health and condition of your fish, you can detect problems early, before they start to die. There are a number of signs that you should look out for.

Behavioural changes

These changes can be seen from the bank by anyone visiting the fishery and should be easy to spot. They include:

- sluggish behaviour (known as lethargy);
- gasping at the surface;
- congregating near inlets and outlets;
- reduced catch rates, suggesting that the fish are not feeding.

Clinical symptoms

These symptoms can be seen by anglers when they catch fish or during routine netting operations.



Thin (emaciated) fish suggest that there is either not enough food in the fishery or the fish are unwell.





Fish can sometimes suffer mouth damage during hooking. If this gets worse it could stop the fish from feeding.



Bulging eyes can be caused by infection or loss of water balance.



Sunken eyes can be caused by emaciation or infection.



Lesions or ulcers are caused by bacterial infections but may develop because of physical damage.



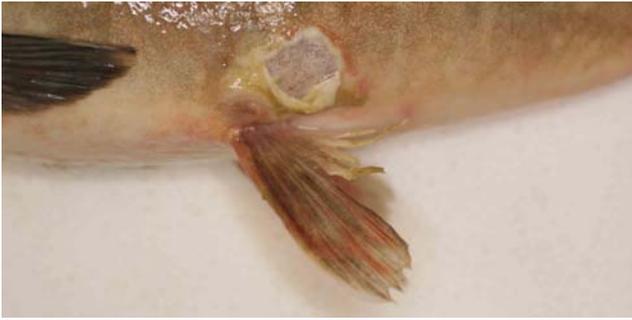
Bleeding under the skin can be caused by infection or physical damage.

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Fin rot is caused by a bacterial infection but can develop from damage to the fins.



Fungal infections on the body are an indicator that the fish are in poor condition. Excess mucus on the head suggests that the fish are being exposed to an irritant.



Fluid in the body cavity (known as dropsy), is caused by bacterial infection or loss of water balance.



Dead (white) tissue in the gills can be caused by toxins and debris in the water, or infection.

Most of these symptoms can be caused by several things including disease, poor water quality and physical damage (from rubbing while spawning, regular handling or predator attack). If you don't know what is causing the problem get professional help.

This fact sheet has been produced by:

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